BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following section summarizes background information used in the development of this Concept Plan and by participants at the Overlake Design Charrette.

Overlake Center Vision

Redmond's vision for the Overlake Center, as expressed in the City's Comprehensive Plan (1999), is for not only a focus for high technology and other employment, but also an attractive location to live, shop and recreate. Redmond envisions this mixed-use area as a vibrant place with a mix and density of uses that provides an attractive and safe place to live close to shopping, restaurants, frequent transit service and other amenities and serves commercial needs for nearby areas. Visions for specific areas are described below.

Retail/Mixed-Use Areas

Increase diversity and activity by encouraging a range of multi-family development, pedestrian activity and alternative transportation modes. Evolve over time to be a vibrant gathering place for people, with a variety of stores and eateries that line the streets as part of mixed-use, multi-story developments.

■ Employment Areas

Continue as a major corporate, advanced technology, research and development, and compatible manufacturing hub for Redmond and the region, while maintaining a campus-like feel with significant trees.

Transportation

Improve mobility choices and connections, including convenient and frequent transit, pedestrian walkways and bikeways, and improved roadway conditions. Protect character of adjacent residential areas from traffic impacts.









Figure 5. Images that illustrate the Overlake Center Vision.





Figure 6. Existing commercial development.



Figure 7. Example of low development intensity.

Existing Conditions

The following is a brief summary of existing conditions described at the Overlake Charrette (associated maps can be found in Appendix B). Charrette participants were also given a "Resource Booklet" containing existing conditions maps, including maps of the conditions described below. This Booklet is available from the City.

Land Uses

Much of the area is occupied by corporate campuses, including Microsoft. In the mixed-use core, there is a wide range of uses, including retail, business park, office and residential.

Character of Existing Commercial Development Existing commercial development in the mixed-use core is similar to many other suburban locations: It is autooriented with non-descript architecture.

Development Intensity

Most of the mixed-use core has a low development intensity (a floor area ratio less than 0.3), generally characterized by one- or two-story buildings that occupy a small portion of their lot.

Zoning

The corporate areas are zoned Overlake Business and Advanced Technology. The mixed-use core is zoned Retail Commercial and the Group Health site is zoned Design District. In the mixed-use core, a wide range of uses is allowed, including retail, office and residential. Only the building envelope is regulated, and mixed-use and residential developments can build up to 6 stories.

Traffic and Collisions

148th Avenue NE carries most of the traffic in the mixeduse core. NE 24th Street and 156th Avenue NE also carry a substantial amount of traffic. Most collisions along 148th Avenue NE occurred at the intersection with NE 24th Street and the east-bound SR 520 on/off ramp.

Transit

The mixed-use core, particularly 148th Avenue NE, NE 24th Street, 152nd Avenue NE and NE 31st Street, are currently served by a number of regional and local transit routes.

Economic Overview

Just prior to the charrette, Community Attributes conducted a broad economic study of the Overlake Center that provides a high-altitude overview of economic conditions in the area. The report concluded that redevelopment opportunities in the Overlake mixed-use core are primarily for retail, residential and office uses. The retail market appears primed and ready today for upgrades and increased activity, both in the form of capital improvements to existing space, as well as expansions and new retail space. Additional office and a 24-hour population associated with new housing both would further support and encourage retail and other amenities, such as dining and entertainment. Overlake could potentially accommodate a higher-end commercial center with a mix of retail, services and possibly with a mix of uses such as office and/or residential.

However, there are three factors that redevelopment must take into account: 1) Most existing developments are performing well, with solid occupancies, steady rent rates and strong tenants; 2) Redevelopment costs at prime sites are high, including the costs of demolition/disposal, new construction and revenue loss associated with disruption to existing businesses; and, 3) There are not many public or private amenities in the area. Infill sites offer fewer development barriers. However, redevelopment of existing sites could be achieved through development at densities substantially higher than those that currently exist and by adding higher paying segments, such as housing and retail.

Residential Market Analysis

The 2005 Residential Market Analysis by NewHomeTrends addressed several issues, including the demographic characteristics of people who would live in the Overlake Urban Center, what types of housing and amenities they are looking for, and what the City can do to encourage this development. The study concluded that Overlake will attract Gen-Y buyers (those younger than 30 years old) who can't or won't pay the price to live in downtown Redmond. These buyers are looking for higher density development close to amenities that fit their lifestyle, including walkable neighborhoods, safety, social gathering spaces, local shopping, and transit. The study also found that Overlake could accommodate 950 additional higher density residential dwellings in the next 5 to 6 years, mainly in

the form of mid-rise condos and apartments, and loft units over mixed-use. Approximately 200 additional dwellings per year could be supported by the market over the next 25 years, reaching a total of approximately 5,800 dwellings by 2030. In order to fully achieve this market, a sense of place needs to be created in the Overlake Center.

Transportation Master Plan

Redmond's Transportation Master Plan (TMP), adopted in November 2005, takes a comprehensive look at the future of City-wide transportation choices. The TMP identified a number of planned transportation improvements, which are detailed on a map in the Resource Booklet. The TMP also identified Multimodal Corridors, which should be designed to pedestrian supportive standards; provide primary bicycle routes; offer a high level of transit service; provide connections to transit-oriented development; fulfill an automobile circulation need by providing a direct connection across town on a collector or arterial with posted speed limits less than 45 mph; and, be designed as "green streets" to promote character as a green city with a small town feel. A map highlighting the multimodal corridors in the Overlake area is available in the Resource Booklet.

Preliminary High Capacity Transit Alignment Analysis

Sound Transit has included a station in the vicinity of 152nd Avenue NE and NE 24th Street as part of a representative alignment under evaluation for Phase 2 (ST2) transit planning, and both Sound Transit's Long Range Plan and Redmond's Transportation Master Plan call for locating a station in the Overlake mixed-use core. The City of Redmond's Preliminary HCT Alignment Analysis analyzed station location alternatives for the Overlake portion of ST2 based on objectives previously identified through transportation and land use planning. Four alternatives were analyzed – three along 152nd Avenue NE and one on 148th Avenue NE. The 152nd Avenue NE alternative located just north of NE 24th Street scored the highest, with the most development potential and the most convenient intermodal connections, though each of the station options along 152nd Avenue met an initial test of viability.

Initial Overlake Outreach

City staff met with business and/or property owners, corporate representatives, developers and employees to discuss issues and opportunities in the Redmond Overlake area. Several concerns and comments stand out as most prominent: Redmond is perceived as having a business climate that is less conducive to small businesses than Seattle's business climate. Overlake is often thought to be located in Bellevue, which connotes a more positive image than Redmond. Most businesses are growing and project that Microsoft's expansion will facilitate additional growth. Many participants commented that providing the services and amenities essential to an urban residential neighborhood, including parks and open space, attractions such as a book store and bakery, convenient transit service and sidewalks, and adequate schools, would be essential for the area to be more than a series of housing developments.